

Mayfield/Graves Co. ATC Principal Roger Pierce Retires After Distinguished and Diversified Career

After 30 years of experience, Mayfield/Graves Co. ATC Principal Roger Dale Pierce will officially retire June 30, 2005. Roger has a Bachelor's degree in Business Education; Master's degree in Distributive Education and a Rank 1 in Administration of Vocational Education - all from Murray State University.

Beginning in August 1975, he became a distributive education instructor at the Marshall Co. Area Vocational Education Center when it was under state control. He stayed there until 1982. At the same time Roger was teaching distributive education, OCTE Executive Director Emil Jezik was teaching carpentry.

From 1982-1997 Roger served as an adjustment counselor at the West Kentucky Easter Seal Center where he held a state position through the Paducah AVEC (now the ATC). This position involved interaction with 200 handicapped adults in a work readiness program each day.

"I loved every minute of it," says Roger. "I worked with 20-50 yr. old people that were mentally challenged and it amazed me what they were capable of doing with the abilities they had."





During his first year, he also served as the basketball coach. It was his premier season and would become one that he would always cherish. Much to his surprise, the team won 2nd place (a silver medal) in the 1982 International Special Olympics in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. To enjoy the victory, Roger walked into the LSU stadium where 85,000 spectators were awaiting all the teams. He looked around and realized that two of his ten

players were missing. To this day, he believes that someone from above was watching over him because as he began to panic, he looked up into the stadium and there at the top, he saw his other two players waving at him. They had seen a baby and wanted to visit. He situated his eight players on the field and told each one to stay put. He then went into the stands to retrieve his other two players.

“I’ve heard it said, ‘The degree of light in life is determined by the amount of darkness we have seen.’ It’s true,” says Roger.

In 1997, Roger became the principal of Paducah ATC. During his tenure, he says he “learned a lot.” He was a first year principal in a building where there were veteran teachers.

“I learned to listen to my teachers before making any decisions and that’s what I want to tell my replacement here because that’s what you need to do,” says Roger. “I went into



a situation where students did not follow the rules and over my period of time, we worked on respect.”

To this day, Roger has a school rule: “Respect and Responsibility – We expect it of our students, we demand it from our staff.”

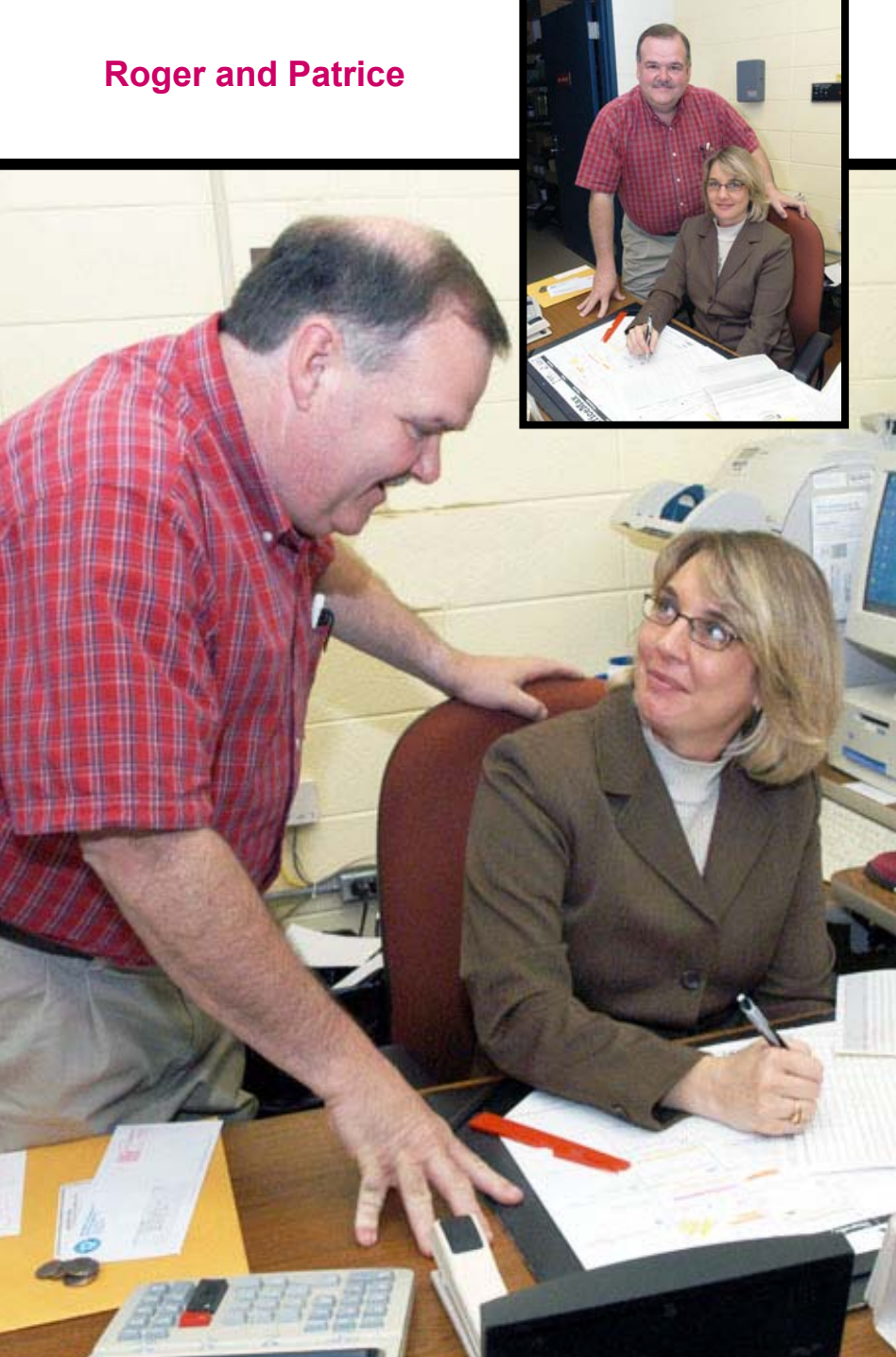
In 2000, Pierce became principal of the Mayfield/Graves Co. ATC, which serves three school districts including Mayfield Independent, Graves Co. and Carlisle Co. One of his prized accomplishments includes actively marketing the school.

“Marketing is the key. We put up new signs for each program. We put pictures in the newspaper to brag about our kids. In fact, we were the first school in the West KY area to put a ‘Student of the Month’ photo in the newspaper for each program area. Now, the Mayfield Messenger does this for all the schools,” says Roger. “I also create a Word document about each student and e-mail it to the superintendent, principal, counselors and mail it to the parents. It’s a real parent pleaser.”

Roger Pierce is a humble man. He has worked extremely hard to provide the right leadership and be of service to his faculty and staff. He says his pride “comes from the accomplishments my teachers and students have made.”

“Kelli Cash has been named a ‘Star Teacher;’ Joel Crider has had a national winner in electricity. We had 27 students complete a Skill Standards certificate and we have had two HOSA and one SkillsUSA VICA students hold state offices. We have achieved

Roger and Patrice



School of Excellence status for two straight years,” says Pierce. “Most steering committees have about twenty members - mine has fifty. I have volunteers including the mayor, judges, school officials, Chamber of Commerce executive director and others who believe that our ATC is a valuable asset in the community. We have become recognized as an educational institution in this area.”

Roger emphatically believes that “if you take ATC’s out of education, the drop-out rate would soar!”

Comments from the faculty and staff at the Mayfield/Graves Co. ATC

“I feel blessed and honored to have had an opportunity to work with Roger Pierce. He sincerely loves his job and it shows in his interaction with all of the staff and students at our area technology center,” says Secretary Patrice Wyatt. “He is patient, kind and has a great sense of humor. I couldn't ask for a better boss!”



**At left:
Greg and
Roger
enjoying a
moment in
the machine
tool
technology
lab.
Pictured
below: Mr.
Pierce and
a machine
tool
technology
student.**

**“Mr. Pierce lets the teachers do their jobs,”
says Machine Tool Technology Instructor Greg
Gordon. “We are here to teach. He is here to
support us and he has done a great job.”**





“Honestly, he is the best principal that I have ever worked for - he’s always up,” says Welding Instructor Charles Price. “You need to take care of your employees. If you do, they will be productive. He has done this. He takes care of some of the little things so that we can focus on our jobs – teaching students.”

Sheryle and Roger



“It has been a pleasure working with Mr. Pierce. From the beginning, he has supported the fact that the instructors know their programs and put faith in us to plan our curriculum to best meet the needs of our students,” says Health Sciences Instructor Sheryl Guess. “Working with the feeder schools has been a challenge, but he has always tried to find a compromise that did not detract from the students getting the best instruction in their chosen

field. I can only hope that the new administrator will have the student’s needs as high on his priority list as Mr. Pierce has had.”

“Mr. Pierce has always been supportive of the instructors,” says Office Technology Instructor Kelli Cash. “It has been his goal to work with the feeder schools in planning the schedules and keeping the core needs of the individual students at the forefront of the planning. It has been a great pleasure working with Mr. Pierce.”

Joel Crider and Roger Pierce



“When Mr. Pierce hired me to teach this program, I wanted to make sure that I didn’t have to stay cramped up in a classroom,” says Electrical Technology Instructor Joel Crider. “I wanted my students out in the community doing live work, while at the same time giving back something to the community that each could be proud of in terms of accomplishing tasks and providing services. Mr. Pierce has allowed me to be in charge of my program.”

Question and Answer Session with Roger Pierce

Q: What do you think people will remember you by?

I think people will remember me as being a good listener. I also think that they will remember respect and responsibility. It applies to all of us.

Q: What are the qualities that make a good principal?

I think a principal should be knowledgeable, consistent, a good listener, an observer, a life-long learner and have the ability to adapt to change.

Q: Where do you see vocational-technical education going?

I see a major change. We've gone from trade schools to vocational schools to area technology centers and that's all wonderful. I was never ashamed of being a vocational school, but I'm very proud of being an area technology center. We have new technology and we are using it – but I don't want to go too far.

Some people want to be welders. It used to be that they could come here and take welding, then go on to West Kentucky for maybe one more year and become a welder. But, that can be taken too far. If you take some of those people and make them take some classes in English, history for instance and they fail the class, then many times they quit school. In the mind of the student, he/she went to school to become a welder. Even though we need these types of classes, we don't want to take this too far because we also need welders. We need to set this up in two ways. If you want to get an associate's degree, then go for it. But, if what you want to become is a good hometown welder; we ought to have something where the individual can do just that without having to take all the other courses to get to be a welder.

We don't want to go too far - with everybody. I've got a lot of kids now that won't go on to postsecondary because it takes two years to get all the basics out of the way and they just wanted to become a welder. Now that's not always your A student, but we have some of those out there that we still care for and I just don't want us to go too far.



“The degree of light in life is determined by the amount of darkness we have seen.”



Q: What guidance and or advice would you provide to any new principal within the system?

During my first year as a principal, I listened more than I talked. My advice is to find a principal that you like and respect. Then, ask for guidance. Arthur Dunn was my guiding principal.

I would also want a principal who has been a teacher. I have been a teacher, counselor and principal. Therefore, my approach is think, listen and then talk.

“I’m proud of the excellent leadership we have in Frankfort,” says Pierce. “All the members of the central office have a useful purpose if we use them. It’s been a pleasure to work with so many fine folks.”